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AUTHOR Stephenson, Mary J.
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ABSTRACT

A study explored changing family patterns among married middle and upper middle class women students over thirty with family intact. Eighty-seven homemaker-students enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park campus, during the spring semester, 1975, responded to a written questionnaire regarding their family patterns of decision making and the division of household labor. A change (since their return to school) was found in all areas of decision making, the greatest being in home management and family relations, with the respondent perceiving the change positively and viewing her husband as perceiving it negatively. Discussion of decisions had improved with fewer emotional outbursts and an effort to understand, listen, and discuss significant decisions with each other more frequently. Family members helped more often with the management of the home, while the husband assumed more responsibility by entertaining the children, grocery shopping, and preparing breakfast. Moreover, positive change far exceeded negative change within the family since the respondent had returned to college. (The questionnaire, written comments of the respondents, and tables summarizing the data are included. For a speech summarizing the study, see Note.) (Author/MEK)

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CHANGING FAMILY PATTERNS OF MARRIED WOMEN OVER THIRTY WHO HAVE RETURNED TO COLLEGE

by
Mary J. Stephenson

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
1976

CE 024 244

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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Changing Family Patterns of Married Women Over Thirty Who Have Returned to College

Mary Johnson Stephenson, Master of Science, 1976

Thesis directed by: Dr. Leda A. Wilson
Associate Professor
Family and Community Development

The primary purpose of this study was to explore changing family patterns among married women over thirty with family intact. A total of eighty-seven homemaker-students responded to a written questionnaire regarding their family patterns of decision making and the division of labor. A change was found in all areas of decision making, the greatest being in home management and in family relations with the respondent perceiving the change positively and viewing her husband as perceiving it negatively. Discussion of decisions improved with less emotional outbursts, an effort to understand, listen and discuss significant decisions more frequently. Family members helped more often with management of the home. In the division of labor the husband assumed more responsibility by entertaining the children, grocery shopping and in the preparation of breakfast. Positive change far exceeded negative change within the family since the respondent had returned to college.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In America there are about 56 million women between the ages of 30 and 65. These women are envied as being the luckiest in the world. The majority are married, have children, are affluent, healthy, better looking, better dressed and more youthful than their grandmothers ever dreamed of being at the same age.

Most of these women over thirty have been socialized to be and have spent their lives being housewives and mothers. It is in recent years with the influence of the feminist movement, that they have been pursuing useful careers after motherhood. Morton Hunt explains:

> More women work in middle life than during their youth. The curve hits its first peak at about age nineteen (when 48 per cent work), its valley at age 30 (when 35 per cent work), and its second peak at 50 (when 49 per cent work). This is strikingly different from all curves of female employment prior to 15 years ago; until then, the percentage of women who worked dwindled slowly and steadily from youth toward old age.

A woman now has a life expectancy of 78.6 years. She has her children earlier and closer together than her grandmother did, bearing her last child when she is twenty-six. Between the time she is thirty-five to forty her children are adolescents, away from home much of the day and becoming highly independent. The nest is not empty yet, but it has an ominously empty look. Her husband is busier than ever with his work, climbing close to the peak in his career. He rarely needs encouragement or advice from her. All in all, she is close to being out of a job and she is in search of new goals, new roles and a new identity.

The options open to these women are many. They may return to

the working world picking up where they left off prior to their marriage and the birth of the children. Some turn to volunteer work in the community. Others in their boredom may pursue leisure activities such as tennis, golf or bridge which help to fill their time.

Colleges today are enrolling a growing number of these women. Women are retraining for a position in the working world that will bring them personal satisfaction as well as financial gain. Women are becoming more aware of the fact that the nest will be empty for the majority of their years and are preparing for a new role, a new identity after motherhood.

This investigation deals with the effect that the wife and mother has upon the family when she returns to college.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research is designed to examine changing family patterns of married women over thirty, husband present, with children, who have returned to college at the University of Maryland, in order to determine how such change affects the family.

THE SUBPROBLEMS

The first subproblem is to determine whether decision making patterns have changed within the family since the wife-mother returned to college.

The second subproblem is to determine whether the division of labor has changed within the family since the wife-mother returned to college.

The third subproblem is to analyze the data and evaluate the changes which have taken place.

THE HYPOTHESES

1. A change will take place in decision making within the family with the wife-mother taking part more in decision making.

2. A change will take place in the division of labor within the family with the family members helping with more of the household work.

3. Negative changes will exceed the positive changes within the family.

THE DELIMITATIONS

The study is limited to married women who are over 30 years of age, living with spouse and with children present.

The study is limited to students enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park campus, during the spring semester, 1975.

THE DEFINITION OF TERMS

Family patterns This concept can be defined as the usual way in which a family makes decisions in seven areas: housing, family relations, finance, level of consumption, education, home management and health. It also includes the customary way of dividing the labor within the home.

Wife-mother Wife-mother is the college student over thirty who is married, husband present and with children.

Decision making The act of deciding what, where and how things are to be done within a particular family is their way of decision making.

Division of labor The person who actually does the household work is determined by the division of labor.

Positive change Positive changes are those perceived by the family to bring about agreement among its members, unity of effect

and changes pleasing to the whole.

Negative change Negative changes are those perceived by the family as being opposite to positive change; those creating disharmony and disorder.

Level of consumption Level of consumption refers to the inventory of actual commodities and services that people prize and measure and that flow through and are used by the family as a consuming unit (Nickell, Rice & Tucker, 1976).

THE ASSUMPTION

The investigator assumes the questionnaire measures what it is designed to measure.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Women who return to college put themselves in a position similar to that of the working woman; they assume an extra role. In their cases, they add the role of a student. The similarity of assuming roles outside the home suggests paralleling the interactions of these two classes of women with their families.

In family decision making, studies have shown that the working woman has more authority in the home than the non-working woman (Gross, Crandall & Knoll, 1973). If it is recognition of worth outside the home that assigns authority, it seems likely that a woman who has returned to college would gain more authority as well.

Research has shown that women who work still do a majority of their own housework with little help from the family. Would a woman who has returned to college be in a similar position?

To aid women in their understanding of family reaction to their addition of another role, it would be helpful to women who are now students to analyze the changes that are taking place in their

family patterns.

RATIONALE

This study hopes to contribute to the understanding of changing family patterns as the role of the wife-mother changes. To do so, it met the following objectives:

1. To pretest twenty wife-mothers who have returned to college, in order to perfect the questionnaire which is the instrument used in this study.

2. To build a conceptual framework of changing family patterns when the wife-mother returns to college by combining evidence found in the review of the literature with that gathered in the pretest.

3. To explore application of the conceptual framework by coding and scoring information obtained in the questionnaires.

4. To re-structure the original conceptual framework based on the findings of this exploratory study.

5. To provide recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

WOMEN BACK IN SCHOOL

There is a trend of increasing employment of middle-aged women as a result of more education, earlier marriages, steadily improving standards of health and living and greater longevity. With larger numbers of women reentering the labor force in their middle years there is a need for counseling and training for the reentry (Kievit, 1972).

Important developments in professional education and re-education of older women have been taking place since the 1960's (Schwartz, Schifter & Gillotti, 1972). Programs called "Continuing Education for Women" are now listed at some 300 college campuses (Buccieri, 1970). These programs strive to help women resume their education successfully while maintaining a family at home.

Women who return to college (often called returnees or "re-treads" by Bergquist, 1973) are motivated to do so for many reasons. First, many women consider care of their homes and families their prime responsibility. These women have traditional values since in their formative years marriage and maternity were considered the exclusive female occupation (Weissman, Pincus, Radding, Lawrence & Siegal, 1973). Consequently, career aspirations have to be made to fit family needs. They find they can make classes fit into their children's schedule and be home when the children are. In this way they can fit their education into long term career plans that can be fulfilled when the children mature. Concurrently, the feminist movement has caused a revision of personal goals, some revisions made with stressful difficulty for many women. While they find

being students can complement their duties at home, they can also prepare for a future career. In this way they feel they will have the best of two worlds.

Moreover, once a woman withdraws from the labor market for marriage and childbearing she must reenter at a low level or retrain. An old college degree may be so outdated as to appear useless, a high school diploma even more so. Her past work experience may have become technologically obsolete.

Then there is the "Bored Housewife Dilemma" referred to by the Rapaports (1971) This title encompasses all those women who find they possess the good things in life, a pleasant home, professional husband, loving children, but discover they are frequently dissatisfied and bored with their lot. To enliven their days, many turn to hobbies, sports, liquor, work outside the home or return to college for serious study.

Often women find the years empty after their children are grown up. At maturity, they seek challenges. Stilley (1975) writes that Hunt feels that middle age is a time for high achievement, with good health and more leisure, when people can fulfill themselves doing things they care about. Increasingly, this means broadening one's mind through the pursuit of a college degree.

Going to college for these women takes courage (Arthur, 1947) They often must overcome pessimism, not only from strangers but from family and friends. Detractors point out that it would be easier for them to settle down to a secure, quiet life within the home. But that alternative may have become enslaving or a barren routine to the restless homemakers at the empty nest stage.

Actually the last quarter of the century brings many opportu-

nities to women in their middle years. Our present day society has reduced family responsibilities while current medical practice has lengthened their lives and increased their physical vigor (Havighurst, 1956; Harris, 1975).

Increasingly, women can no longer rely on being a wife as a lifetime role. Rather, census studies (1974) show that we have an ever growing number of female single parents who support their families. As preparation for that possibility it would be wise for a woman to acquire an education to provide better for her children.

Lastly, the "life cycle squeeze" appears to be a powerful motive for many women to enter or reenter college early (Blake, 1974). The "life cycle squeeze" is a time when the family's financial needs will have reached a peak, when children are adolescent and of college age. A woman with an eye to the future will have finished her retraining in college so she may enter the labor force and supplement the family income when most needed.

Few studies have been made concerning women back in college. However, one that has been done centers on the issue of why a woman would return (Zatlin, Stroandt & Botivinick, 1973). The personality and values of these women are looked at hypothesizing that these women were unique. To the contrary, they found that these women were similar to other women of their age who pursue a more traditional path.

Other studies center around working women and study their personality characteristics and values in regard to vocational interests (Faunce, 1968; Elton & Rose, 1967; Edwards, 1969). Researchers seem to anticipate personality differences between the homemaker and career orientated women only to find a similarity and

that vocational interest would be raised if home-career conflict were reduced (Farmer & Bohn, 1970; Gysbers & Johnston, 1968).

DECISION MAKING AND COMMUNICATING WITHIN THE FAMILY

Decision making and communicating are fundamental to the dynamic social processes within the family. Decision making involves making choices or resolving alternatives.

Deising (1962) has concluded that the majority of decisions made are socio-economic in nature. A definition for social decisions is a focus on selecting the types of roles an individual will play, the specific content he will choose to put into these roles, and how he will integrate these roles into a consistent self (Price, 1969)

Deacon and Firebaugh (1975) state:

> Social decisions within a family system are more personal and interpersonal in nature than the term may suggest to many people. Decisions pertaining to the life, welfare, and relations of human beings in a community fit the internal responsibility and relations as well as those that are external if the definition is interpreted specifically.
>
> A primary interest with respect to social decisions in the family setting is to keep values, goals, and standards in home management adequately consistent with, yet responsive to, members' current needs. Through social decisions, potential conflict between members' values and goals are anticipated and/or resolved by selecting among or reorienting alternative directions that are more consistent with the total interests of the family and significant groups. Social decisions often relate to the definition of roles.

Today, decisions that relate to the definition of roles are of special concern. Women in the traditional social role of wife and mother are taking on new roles, such as that of a salaried employee, volunteer worker or college student. As the role of a woman changes within the family this may bring about shifts in other family roles.

Often, specific duties will have to change.

Because women themselves are often uncertain about roles, so are their husbands and families. With the changing status of women, a woman has a wide choice of what roles to play. The woman often develops stress because she may fulfill one role out of duty and wish she were fulfilling another. What she considers to be desirable roles may be quite disagreeable to her husband. Resolution of these role conflicts is difficult because each partner brought to the marriage his or her own parental model and because the ideal of each is rooted in his reference group. These differing role concepts are internalized in terms of values (Lantz & Snyder, 1962).

Economic decisions deal with things that can be measured such as allocation of resources or the exchange of one resource for another to meet various family goals. Such decisions often concern education, finances, and the work of the home.

Patterns develop concerning how economic decisions are made. They may be democratic and/or authoritarian depending on the family or the nature of the decision.

Ample research has been done on who makes decisions and how many decisions are made within the household setting. Similarities are found among them. Blood and Hill (1970) declare that:

1. The husband's job is generally his decision.

2. Whether a wife should work outside the home is a mutual decision.

3. Life insurance which lies in the area of high finance is the husband's decision.

4. Low finance areas such as food, clothing and children's

spending money are in the wife's decision making domain.

5. The family vacation and family home which affect both partners heavily are essentially joint decisions.

It is interesting to note that the patterns of decision making of husbands and wives are similar in the different countries where research has been done. Following a 1960 Detroit study, a number of cross-cultural studies in Tokyo, Taiwan, Paris, and Athens found many similarities, even with sampling differences and modifications in questions about decisions due to cultural differences (Blood & Hill, 1970). Major financial decisions tend to be the husband's or joint decisions, and those relating to household management tend to be the wife's.

One more theory which may be applied to help in the understanding of how families make decisions and resolve conflicts has been proposed by Festinger (1957) in his theory of cognitive dissonance. This theory centers around the idea that if a person knows various things that are not psychologically consistent with one another, he will, in a variety of ways, try to make them more consistent. Two items of information that psychologically do not fit together are said to be in dissonant relation to each other.

Cognitive dissonance is a motivating state of affairs. Dissonance impels a person to change his opinions or his behavior. The changes in items of information that produce or restore consistency are referred to as dissonance-reducing changes. According to the theory, the process of dissonance reduction should lead, after the decision, to an increase in the desirability of the chosen alternative and a decrease in the desirability of the rejected alternative. Dissonance reduction does not occur during the process of making a

decision but only after the decision is made and the outcome is clear.

Communication among family members and others in the near environment is so closely interwoven with decision making that its significance as a separate process is not widely recognized.

Bienvenu (1967) feels that effective communication with others must be built upon a firm foundation of respect for self and others. Ideal communication occurs most frequently between people who have similar beliefs, values, education, social status, and other attributes (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971).

Family communication is related to social class, with more communication occurring in families with higher social positions (Regan, 1967). Satisfaction with communication lessens with years of marriage (Komarovsky, 1962).

There are three types of decision making affected by communication within the family; consensual, accommodation and de facto. Consensual decision making involves communication in which all family members give equal assent and feel equally committed to the decision.

In accommodation, agreement comes through accepting the desire of the dominant person when all views are not reconciled. Research has shown that the working wife is more dominant within the family than the non-working wife (Blood & Hamblin, 1958; Heer, 1958; Hoffman, 1958; Pogrebin, 1973).

De facto decisions tend to follow from lack of communication of alternatives. Agreement is by the absence of dissent rather than by active assent. Commitment is by the course of events rather than

by acceptance.

Ideally, communication within the family facilitates problem solving and influences all aspects of managerial activity.

DIVISION OF LABOR WITHIN THE FAMILY

Given the difficulties that confront a married woman with children who wishes to pursue an education it is clear that the support of her husband is a crucial element to her success (Fogarty, Rapoport & Rapoport, 1971; Frank, 1969; Gross, Crandall & Knoll, 1973).

Auvinen (1970) feels that in order for a woman to study or work effectively outside the home, it is necessary for the husband to participate to a relatively large extent in the household and child care tasks, so that the pressures that generally fall heavily on the mother of the family may be redistributed more evenly.

Many household activities are traditionally prescribed as women's work, and women inside and outside the feminist movement continue to find that housework is regarded primarily as their responsibility. (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1975) Men spend limited time in work around the house.

A number of studies indicate that husbands participate more in homemaking tasks when the wife is gainfully employed, however, the amount of help given is not significant (Lund, 1976) Geiken (1964) found that most sharing occurred in "authority patterns" or decision making and planning, with child care tasks coming second, and housekeeping tasks being shared least often.

Walker (1973) found that a husband contributes in addition to his regular employment an average of 11 hours each week to household work. If his wife takes outside employment, his average

weekly household work contribution does not increase.

On the other hand, Wenck (1967) reported that husbands of employed women helped more with all household jobs except child care. In this study the children were older than in the Geiken sample.

Vanek (1974) found that American husbands spend only a few hours a week at household work and most of what they do is shopping.

Of interest to the division of labor within the home; children contribute more to household work when the mother is employed (Walker & Gauger, 1973).

Intriguingly, these theories and research findings were substantiated in the pretest, the results which follow.

PRETEST RESULTS

Twenty women volunteered to take part in the pretest which was completed in the spring of 1975. They were students at the University of Maryland at the time. All were married more than five years, with spouse present. All had children. The majority of these children were of school age. The subjects were all over thirty years of age.

Forty-five per cent of their spouses had completed graduate school; all but one had completed college. Sixty-five per cent had incomes over $20,000 per year.

Sixty per cent of the women indicated that they returned to college to retrain for the working world. Most were uncertain about career expectations as well as their future income. As to the way they perceived their family's reaction to their return to college: fifty-five percent reported "positive" and the remainder

saw their reaction as being "negative."

It was found that their husbands did not help more with housework to any noticeable degree. When they did help it was by shopping or getting the family breakfast. A change was also shown in the way the bills were paid.

Within the family, this study views decision making in seven areas: housing, family relations, financial, level of consumption, education, home management and health. It was important to look at the present situation to see if a change had taken place since the subject's return to college. The majority of the subjects felt that the responsibility for the above areas should be equally shared by husband and wife. The most obvious changes in the way decisions were made were in the areas of finance and home management, which in turn seemed to bring about change in the area of family relations. This carried over into their view of satisfaction in decision making as well as to the consultation of spouse before making these decisions. Of interest, the women subjects changed twenty-five per cent in frequency of their consultation with their husbands before making a decision regarding education while the husband showed less satisfaction in the way these decisions were made.

In the discussion of decisions, the women back in college saw a great deal of change in their initiating discussions; that is, they became angrier more often, but also tried to understand their husbands' views more often. In addition, they also saw changes taking place in the way he represented his facts, tried to draw his wife out and in his understanding of the discussion. They reported that he would feel hurt more often.

This information was applied to the theoretical framework of decision making and the division of labor within the family.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This investigator theorizes that the woman who returns to college will begin making more of the family decisions. This is due to a more independent evaluation of herself as she views herself a success out and away from the family unit (break away from the mother role) and also due to the support of the feminist movement.

Furthermore, family members will be of more help in the household chores. With the added burden of class and study time the woman who returns to college will have less time to do her domestic duties. As with the woman who returns to work she will use her time more efficiently, give up some of the frivolous details and also call on her family for more help.

The investigator further theorizes that the children will be more willing to help mother than the husband will be. It is easier for them to change their family patterns than for the husband who has been socialized for many years as to what his duties within the family are. If he offers to help, it will be in such areas as shopping and helping with the children. He will rarely take on the laundry or the cleaning as he sees these household duties as feminine.

Many changes will take place within the family as the wife-mother becomes a part of the world away from home. The investigator theorizes that there will be more negative changes than positive ones. This may be caused by the way the women studied are socialized. Almost all are unprepared for the independence

thrust upon them by the changing status of women. Though they know what they read and hear is right for them they are filled with guilt feelings as they begin to place themselves first in their own lives. They will carry this guilt into the family evidenced by increased desire for approval from the members. Because the family members are under more pressure due to the wife-mother's choice of returning to college they will often react negatively.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter outlines the procedures followed in collecting the data. It describes the sampling and collection procedures, as well as sets forth an explanation of the questionnaire and the treatment of the data.

THE SAMPLE

The research sample consists of undergraduate married women over thirty, spouse present, who were students at the University of Maryland, College Park campus during spring semester, 1975.

A proposal concerning this research project was submitted to the Committee for Research on Human Subjects, University of Maryland Graduate School, in July of 1975. With their approval and permission a computer printout of the above described subjects was obtained from the Office of Admissions and Registrations.

All first year students were omitted. This was done to eliminate those students who might be trying their hand at the collegiate world and not in serious pursuit of a degree.

To choose the sample, systematic sampling (Leedy, 1974) was employed on the remainder of the computer printout list.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

A letter was sent requesting each subject's permission to mail them the questionnaire. A return, stamped post card was included for their answer. Subsequently,

1. The questionnaire was mailed to each willing subject with a return stamped envelope attached.

2. Each questionnaire was identified by the case number of the participant.

3. The computer printout list acted as the master list.

4. Confidentiality was stressed.

5. A list was made of those interested in the results of the research.

TABLE 1

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Total population			647
First year students			171
Sample used in mailout for permission			238
Post cards returned			175
	Yes	152	
	No	7	
	Not applicable	16	
Post cards not returned			63
Sample used in mailout of questionnaire			152
Questionnaire returned, complete and usable			87 = N
Questionnaire returned, not applicable, spouse absent			16
Questionnaire not deliverable			2
Questionnaire not returned			47

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire gathered data in the following areas:

1. Personal data

   a. years married

   b. age of subject and spouse

c. number of children and their ages

d. spouse's education and occupation

e. credits of college completed by subject

f. subject's employment record

g. motivations for returning to college

h. job-career expectations

i. expectation of income

j. present family income

k. family reaction to subject's return to college

2. Satisfaction derived from family decisions concerning (Mann, 1972)

a. housing

b. family relations

c. finance

d. level of consumption

e. education

f. home management

g. health

The data gathered pertained to the satisfaction of the wife-mother as well as her view of her husband's satisfaction in the way decisions are made within the family. An area was included for identifying positive or negative change if a change had been made in the decision making process since her return to college.

3. Discussion of decisions (Mann, 1972)

These data dealt with the wife-mother's discussion method in the making of significant decisions. She also gave her perception of her husband's discussion methods. If there were areas of change, positive or negative, since her return to college, they

were indicated.

4. Consultation of spouse before making a decision (Mann, 1972)

The same variables were used in this area as in area two above. The data collected dealt with the wife-mother's consultation of spouse before making significant decisions and the way in which she viewed her husband's consultation with her. It also dealt with changes, positive or negative, that have taken place since her return to college.

5. Areas of responsibility (Mann, 1972)

The same variables were used in this area as in area two above. This section pertained to the wife-mother's view of whose responsibility the above areas were. Conclusions could then be drawn about whether she saw herself in the traditional role of the housewife and mother.

6. Division of labor (Gaylin, 1961)

a. marketing
b. household management
c. household record keeping
d. food preparation
e. house care
f. house maintenance
g. yard care
h. car care
i. physical and other care of family members

The data gathered indicate who took or takes care of these activities and whether there has been a change since the wife-mother returned to college.

There is a section for evaluation of whether the children are

of greater help with household tasks now than before their mother's return to college.

TREATMENT OF THE DATA

The data were coded and tabulated acquiring descriptive statistics and one-way frequency distributions in order to describe the sample's view of changing family patterns in decision making and in the division of labor.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBJECTS

All subjects chosen for the study met certain criteria. First, they were over thirty years of age, married, and with spouse present. The average age of the subjects was 37.6 years while the average age of their spouses was 40.7 years. They had been married an average of 16 years.

TABLE 2

AGES OF WIVES (N=87)

Years	Frequency
30-39	64
40-49	16
50-59	6
60 or more	1
TOTAL	87

A second criterion required that the subjects have at least one child. Over two-thirds of the subjects had two or three children while 11.5 per cent had one child. Five of the subjects had six or more children. The mean number of children was 2.7.

Seventy-seven per cent of these children were of school age, K-12. About ten per cent of the sample had children of preschool age and 12.6 per cent past high school age. The majority (64.3 per cent)

of the subjects had children of both sexes, while 21.4 per cent had all boys and the remaining 14.3 per cent had all girls.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY

Number	Per Cent
1	11.5
2	35.6
3	33.3
4	11.5
5	2.3
6	3.4
7	2.2
TOTAL	100.0

TABLE 4

AGES OF CHILDREN (N=84)

Ages	Per Cent
Preschool	10.7
Elementary School	51.2
Jr.-Sr. High School	28.6
Older	9.5
TOTAL	100.0

Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position (1957) was used to estimate the family's social class according to the husband's education and occupation. Professional occupations were held by 56 per cent of the husbands. Another 29 per cent held major administrative or managerial positions. The majority (78 per cent) had completed college with 43 per cent having completed some graduate work. Twelve had a Master's degree, six had a law degree, and sixteen had their doctorates.

TABLE 5

OCCUPATION OF HUSBANDS

Occupation	Per Cent
Professional	56.0
Administrative or Managerial	28.6
Skilled Worker	14.3
Clerical	1.2
TOTAL	100.1*

*Rounding Error

TABLE 6

EDUCATION OF HUSBANDS (N=86)

Years	Per Cent
12	8.1
13	1.1
14	10.5
15	2.3
16	34.9
17	4.7
18	14.0
19	5.8
20	17.4
22	1.1
TOTAL	99.9*

*Rounding Error

All of the subjects had completed more than one year (30 credit hours) of college. The sample was taken during the spring semester of 1975 and 39 per cent of the subjects were graduating at that time. Sixty-eight per cent of the students were of full time status.

Of the 87 subjects, 70 reported a choice of major field in their college education. Of these 63 (72 per cent), were majoring in the liberal arts. Eighteen (21 per cent) of these subjects were majoring in education.

TABLE 7

MAJOR FIELD OF EDUCATION (N=87)

Field of Education	Per Cent
Liberal Arts	72.4
Sciences	8.0
Not Specified	19.5
TOTAL	99.9*

*Rounding Error

When asked their occupation, the majority (60 per cent) classified themselves as housewives. About 12 per cent stated semi-professional occupations, 9.4 per cent that of a skilled worker, 17.6 per cent that of a clerical worker, and one subject (1.2 per cent) was an unskilled worker (Hollingshead, 1957).

Sixty-six (76.7 per cent) of the subjects reported a total yearly income of $20,000 or more.

TABLE 8

FAMILY YEARLY INCOME (N=86)

Income	Per Cent
$10,000 to $14,999	9.3
$15,000 to $19,999	14.0
$20,000 or more	76.7
TOTAL	100.0

Only one subject stated that she had never been gainfully employed. Most (91 per cent) had worked in a skilled or clerical type of employment. All but 15 (17 per cent) had worked at some time since their marriage.

The sample had been back in college an average of 4.2 years. They had been out of the labor market an average of 8.7 years.

When asked their motivations for returning to college, 26 (30 per cent) desired a better job, 23 (26 per cent) were seeking self actualization, and 25 (29 per cent) wanted a college degree.

TABLE 9

MOTIVATIONS FOR RETURN TO COLLEGE (N=87)

Reason	Frequency
Better job	26
Self-support	7
Self actualization	23
Prepare for "empty nest"	6
Degree	25
TOTAL	87

The majority (66 per cent) expected a career of a professional or semi-professional nature. Twenty-eight per cent were uncertain about their career expectations. Most (35.6 per cent) were uncertain about their future income. Only two per cent felt they would command an income of $20,000 or more.

TABLE 10

CAREER EXPECTATIONS (N=87)

Occupation	Per Cent
Professional	17.2
Semi-professional	48.3
Skilled	6.9
Uncertain	27.6
TOTAL	100.0

TABLE 11

INCOME EXPECTATIONS (N=87)

Income	Per Cent
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	21.8
$10,000 to $14,999	29.9
$15,000 to $19,999	10.3
$20,000 or more	2.3
Uncertain	35.6
TOTAL	99.9*

*Rounding Error

HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS

Three hypotheses were investigated in this study.

Hypothesis one: A change will take place in decision making within the family with the wife-mother taking part more in decision making.

The subjects were questioned as to who within the marriage was responsible for the various areas of family life. The majority indicated that the responsibility should be equally shared in all areas. A large percentage saw home management (32.9 per cent) and health (16.5 per cent) as usually the woman's responsibility. Some also viewed finance as usually the man's responsibility (16.3 per cent) as shown in Table 12.

Certain areas were examined in the decision making process; satisfaction derived from decisions, discussion of decisions, and consultation of spouse when making a decision.

The questionnaire allowed the subject to indicate her own reactions and also her perception of her husband's reactions to the decisions made within their family.

The greatest area of satisfaction derived from decisions was in housing (77.6 per cent of subjects and 78.6 per cent of their husbands). The subjects and their husbands seemed the least satisfied in the areas of home management (43.5 per cent of subjects and 48.2 per cent of their husbands) and family relations (54.1 per cent of subjects and 46.4 per cent of their husbands).

Positive changes were prominent among the subjects with 31.6 per cent positive change in family relations, 40.5 per cent positive change in education, and 30.0 per cent positive change in home management. Opposing this was the prominence of negative change

among the husbands in the areas of family relations (26.3 per cent negative change) and in the area of home management (32.9 per cent negative change) as shown in Tables 13 and 14.

When significant decisions were made between the subject and her husband, the discussion had improved since her return to college. Both she and her husband would listen to each other more often (25.3 per cent), try to understand their spouse's view (30 per cent of subjects and 26.2 per cent of their spouses), and talk more frequently (26.2 per cent of subjects and 21.8 per cent of their spouses). In addition the subjects felt they tried to clarify the issue (30.4 per cent) and present the facts (31.6 per cent) more often. The subjects would get emotional less frequently. (See Tables 15 and 16.)

Tables 17 and 18 indicate that when questioned about how often they consulted their spouse before making a decision in the areas of family life, the subjects rarely (30.2 per cent) consulted him in home management. Yet when a major decision such as in housing was made the spouses frequently consulted each other (88.2 per cent of subjects and 83.3 per cent of their husbands).

Positive changes took precedence in each area being the most prominent in family relations (20 per cent of subjects and 18.7 per cent of their spouses).

TABLE 12

SUBJECT'S OPINION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR AREAS OF FAMILY LIVING/PERCENTAGE

Area	Only Man's	Usually Man's	Sometimes Man's	Neither Man's Nor Woman's	Equally Man's And Woman's	Sometimes Woman's	Usually Woman's	Only Woman's
Housing		4.7		2.3	88.4	2.3	2.3	
Family Relations			2.3	1.1	82.6	8.1	4.7	1.2
Finance		16.3	8.1		70.9	2.3	2.3	
Level of Consumption	1.2			3.5	80.2	5.8	8.1	1.2
Education	1.2		2.4	2.4	83.5	1.2	9.4	
Health	1.2	1.2		2.4	71.8	7.1	16.5	
Home Management		1.2	1.2		51.8	8.2	32.9	4.7

TABLE 13

SUBJECT'S SATISFACTION DERIVED FROM DECISIONS/PERCENTAGE

Area	Satisfied	More Satisfied Than Not	Less Satisfied Than Not	Not Satisfied	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Housing	77.6	15.3	5.9	1.2	17.5	2.5	79.9
Family Relations	54.1	30.6	9.4	5.9	31.6	13.9	54.5
Finance	54.8	29.8	11.9	3.6	27.5	11.2	61.2
Level of Consumption	53.7	36.2	6.3	3.6	18.2	6.5	75.3
Education	67.4	25.6	4.7	2.4	40.5	1.3	58.3
Health	66.7	23.8	7.1	2.4	15.2	7.6	77.2
Home Management	43.5	30.6	21.2	4.8	30.0	16.2	53.7

TABLE 14

HUSBAND'S SATISFACTION DERIVED FROM DECISIONS/PERCENTAGE

Area	Satisfied	More Satisfied Than Not	Less Satisfied Than Not	Not Satisfied	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Housing	78.6	11.9	7.1	2.4	13.3	8.0	78.6
Family Relations	46.4	29.8	15.5	8.3	22.4	26.3	51.3
Finance	52.4	32.1	9.5	6.0	17.1	15.8	67.1
Level of Consumption	51.2	34.1	11.0	3.6	13.5	12.2	74.4
Education	71.1	16.9	12.0	0.0	28.9	5.3	65.8
Health	74.7	22.9	2.4	0.0	13.2	1.3	85.5
Home Management	48.2	28.2	17.6	5.9	14.5	32.9	52.6

TABLE 15

SUBJECT'S REACTION IN DISCUSSION OF DECISIONS/PERCENTAGE

Area	Always or Nearly Always	Sometimes	Very Seldom	Never or Most Never	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Initiate discussion	36.8	58.6	5.4	1.1	22.5	3.7	73.7
Get emotional	4.6	65.5	20.7	9.2	20.5	14.1	65.4
Object to spouse's suggestion	1.1	62.1	29.9	6.9	16.1	9.2	63.2
Prefer to accept mate's decision without much discussion	5.7	26.4	37.9	29.9	17.7	6.3	75.9
Listen	72.4	25.3	2.3	0.0	25.3	3.8	70.9
Clarify the issue	46.5	51.2	2.3	0.0	30.4	1.3	68.4
Support the other person	38.4	58.1	3.5	0.0	21.5	3.8	74.7
Present facts	54.0	40.2	4.6	1.1	31.6	1.3	67.2
Try to understand spouse's view	71.3	25.3	2.3	1.1	30.0	3.7	66.2
Talk	70.9	26.7	2.3	0.0	26.2	1.2	72.4
Make the final decision	4.7	79.1	16.3	0.0	20.0	1.2	78.7

TABLE 16

HUSBAND'S REACTION IN DISCUSSION OF DECISIONS/PERCENTAGE

Area	Always or Nearly Always	Sometimes	Very Seldom	Never or Most Never	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Initiate discussion	9.3	74.4	15.1	1.2	10.3	2.6	87.2
Get emotional	4.7	44.1	39.5	11.6	7.7	10.3	82.1
Object to spouse's suggestions	4.6	65.6	21.8	8.0	10.1	3.8	86.1
Prefer to accept mate's decision without much discussion	5.7	36.8	36.8	20.7	11.5	2.6	85.9
Listen	52.3	44.2	1.2	2.3	25.3	3.8	70.9
Clarify the issue	46.5	41.9	10.5	1.2	19.2	5.1	75.6
Support the other person	35.3	55.3	7.1	2.4	13.7	5.0	81.2
Present facts	55.8	33.7	10.5	0.0	15.4	3.8	80.8
Try to understand spouse's views	48.8	41.9	9.3	0.0	26.2	3.7	70.0
Talk	45.3	46.5	7.0	1.2	21.8	6.4	71.8
Make final decision	20.0	67.1	10.6	2.4	9.2	3.9	86.8

TABLE 17

SUBJECTS CONSULTATION OF SPOUSE WHEN MAKING A DECISION/PERCENTAGE

Area	Always or Nearly Always	Sometimes	Very Seldom	Never or Most Never	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Housing	88.2	9.4	2.4	0.0	2.7	6.7	90.7
Family Relations	47.7	48.8	2.4	1.2	20.0	8.0	72.0
Finance	58.1	36.0	5.8	0.0	11.8	5.3	82.9
Level of Consumption	40.5	47.6	9.5	2.4	12.3	2.7	85.0
Education	58.6	29.9	9.2	2.3	17.3	5.3	77.3
Health	59.3	29.1	8.2	3.5	9.2	3.9	86.8
Home Management	30.2	50.0	12.8	7.0	14.7	5.3	80.0

TABLE 18

HUSBAND'S CONSULTATION OF SPOUSE WHEN MAKING A DECISION/PERCENTAGE

Area	Always or Nearly Always	Sometimes	Very Seldom	Never or Most Never	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Housing	83.3	10.7	4.8	1.2	7.9	3.9	88.2
Family Relations	60.5	30.2	8.2	1.2	18.7	6.7	74.6
Finance	49.4	41.4	9.2	0.0	11.8	2.6	85.5
Level of Consumption	49.4	40.0	9.4	1.2	11.0	4.1	84.9
Education	65.9	21.2	10.6	2.4	10.7	2.7	86.6
Health	59.3	24.4	12.8	3.5	6.6	3.9	89.5
Home Management	60.5	25.6	9.3	4.7	9.3	4.0	86.7

Hypothesis two: A change will take place in the division of labor within the family with the family members helping with more of the household work.

When asked directly whether their families helped with more of the household work, the subjects stated that 59.8 per cent of their husbands helped more often and 43.7 per cent of their children helped more often.

TABLE 19

HUSBAND HELP WITH HOUSEWORK (N=87)

Amount	Per Cent
Often	41.4
Sometimes	34.5
Seldom	14.9
Never	9.2
TOTAL	100.0

TABLE 20

CHANGE SINCE WIFE'S RETURN TO COLLEGE (N=87)

Change	Per Cent
More	59.8
Less	2.3
No change	37.9
TOTAL	100.0

TABLE 21

CHILDREN HELP WITH HOUSEWORK (N=87)

Amount	Per Cent
Often	35.6
Sometimes	31.0
Seldom	14.9
Never	18.4
TOTAL	99.9*

*Rounding Error

TABLE 22

CHANGE SINCE MOTHER'S RETURN TO COLLEGE (N=87)

Change	Per Cent
More	43.7
Less	8.0
No change	48.3
TOTAL	100.0

As Table No. 23 indicates, husbands helped to some degree in all areas except diaper changing. The subjects participated heavier in all activities except garbage removal, car washing, and making small repairs around the house. These activities were most likely to be done by the husband.

The areas in which most change was found, that change being positive, was in the entertainment of children (24.6 per cent), grocery shopping (34.9 per cent), and preparation of breakfast (27.9 per cent).

TABLE 23

SUBJECT'S VIEW OF FAMILY DIVISION OF LABOR/PERCENTAGE

Family Activity	Husband 1	2	3	4	5	Wife 6	Positive Change	Negative Change	No Change
Takes children out for fun	1.2	14.5	28.3	40.3	10.8	4.8	24.6	8.5	69.2
Goes shopping for groceries	3.4	6.9	6.3	12.0	28.7	42.5	34.9	3.1	77.7
Changes diapers	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.5	45.2	34.2	2.1	7.5	91.5
Takes out the garbage	11.2	32.5	21.2	13.7	12.5	8.7	18.2	3.0	78.8
Handles calls from creditors, exchanges merchandise	4.7	11.6	18.5	14.0	24.4	26.7	6.9	4.2	88.9
Bathes children	1.3	3.8	7.0	18.6	26.9	42.3	8.9	3.6	87.5
Cleans windows or walls	3.7	5.0	4.4	16.8	22.5	47.5	7.7	7.7	84.6
Puts the children to bed	1.2	12.5	23.7	37.5	22.5	2.5	15.0	3.3	81.6
Cleans the floors	5.9	2.4	3.6	15.1	23.5	50.6	7.2	7.2	85.5
Gets up at night with the children	6.3	1.2	11.2	25.0	20.0	36.2	10.9	3.1	85.9
Gets breakfast	4.7	3.5	6.5	22.9	22.4	40.0	27.9	5.9	66.2
Dresses children in the morning	0.0	1.6	1.6	6.9	19.5	54.0	9.3	3.7	87.0
Washes the car	54.2	19.4	14.6	3.5	2.8	5.6	1.6	4.8	93.5
Does small repairs around house	41.9	29.1	8.7	13.4	4.7	2.3	11.6	5.8	82.6
Helps children with school work	1.2	13.4	12.8	33.6	18.3	20.7	17.7	3.2	79.0
Pays bills and sets family budget	22.1	16.3	8.9	8.9	11.6	30.2	12.8	5.6	81.7
Attends school conferences	0.0	8.6	3.7	33.4	21.0	33.3	9.4	3.1	87.5
Handles community disputes, such as with neighbors, landlord	15.4	9.2	23.1	27.7	9.2	15.4	3.4	3.4	93.1

Hypothesis three: Negative changes will exceed the positive changes within the family.

Two-thirds of the subjects stated that all members of their family had reacted positively to their return to college. The remaining subjects felt one or more of their family members was not pleased with their return.

TABLE 24

FAMILY REACTION (N=87)

Reaction	Per Cent
Positive, all members	64.4
Negative, all members	13.8
Indifferent, all members	2.3
Spouse negative, children positive	8.0
Spouse positive, children negative	11.5
TOTAL	100.0

This hypothesis was not supported. With the positive reaction to the wife-mother's return to school occurred positive changes in decision making and division of labor which far exceeded the negative changes. The largest change came in satisfaction derived from decisions (33.2 per cent).

TABLE 25

CHANGE SINCE RETURN TO COLLEGE

Topic Topic	Positive Change	Negative Change	Total Change
Satisfaction derived from decisions	21.8	11.6	33.2
Discussion of decisions	19.7	4.6	24.3
Consultation of spouse	11.7	4.7	16.4
Division of labor	12.8	4.8	17.6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The subjects were all wife-mothers of intact families with at least one child. The majority of the subjects and their spouses were in the 30-39 year age category and married for an average of 16 years. Most (60 per cent) had two or three children, the majority of children (77 per cent) of school age.

According to the husband's education and occupation, the families were from middle to upper middle class and presumably free of any extensive monetary strains.

Thirty-nine per cent of the subjects graduated in the spring of 1975. All had completed over 30 credit hours. Sixty-three of the eighty-seven students were majoring in liberal arts.

All but one subject had been gainfully employed at some time, most (91 per cent) in skilled or clerical work. Sixty per cent were unemployed at the time the data were gathered.

Upon completion of college the majority (66 per cent) expected a career of professional or semi-professional nature. A large

group were uncertain about career (27.6 per cent) and future income (35.6 per cent).

When asked who should be responsible, husband or wife, for the major areas of family living the majority felt it should be equally shared through a large per cent (32.9) did feel that home management was usually the woman's responsibility.

When making decisions the subjects and their spouses consulted each other the most in the area of housing (88.2 per cent for subject and 83.3 per cent for their husbands). This area was also the one in which the most satisfaction was derived from decision making (77.6 per cent for subject and 78.6 per cent for their husband).

The area of home management seemed to bring the subjects and their husbands the least satisfaction (43.5 per cent subjects and 48.2 per cent their husbands). The wives consulted their husbands the least (30.2 per cent) about decisions in this area. The largest change in satisfaction derived from decisions occurred here with the subjects feeling positive (30 per cent) about the change and perceiving their husbands as feeling negative (32.9 per cent) about the change.

When consulting their spouses about family relations, positive changes had taken place about 20 per cent of the time since the wife-mother had returned to college. Yet satisfaction derived from these decisions was low (54.1 per cent of subject and 46.4 per cent of their husbands) in comparison to most areas. Once again the subjects viewed the change as positive (31.6 per cent) for themselves and the change as negative (26.3 per cent for their husbands.

The subjects were satisfied (67.4 per cent) with decisions made

regarding education and felt this was the greatest area (40.5 per cent) of positive change since their return to college.

Discussion of significant decisions improved with less emotional outbursts, an attempt to listen more often (25.3 per cent), try to understand the other person's point of view more often (30 per cent for subject, 26.2 per cent for spouse), and talking more frequently (26.2 per cent for subject and 21.8 per cent for spouse). The subjects also tried to clarify the issue (30.4 per cent) and present facts (31.6 per cent) more often.

Since the wife-mother returned to college her family has helped her more often with the management of the home (husband 74.3 per cent, children 60.3 per cent).

When questioned about the division of labor within the home the husband helped some in all activities except diaper changing. The wife assumed major responsibility for most family activities. The work around the home that the husband was most likely to do was small repairs and washing of the car. He also was likely to remove the garbage. The areas in which most change was found was in the entertainment of children, grocery shopping and the preparation of breakfast. Since it was indicated that the husband helped more and the subject viewed the change as positive one may be assured that the husband accepted more responsibility for these activities.

Sixty-four per cent of the subjects stated that their family reacted positively to their return to college. Positive changes far exceeded negative changes in decision making and in the division of labor disproving the third hypothesis.

In the space provided the subjects commented about their family life (Appendix 3). The comments reflected and further explained the data. They ranged from positive feelings such as "My return to college has enriched our family life," to the negative, "Male chauvinism reigns." In addition, many of the subjects felt they were more self-assured, had more self-respect and had gained an independent feeling about themselves. "I can think again" is a comment which describes their new attitude.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

Colleges are enrolling an ever growing number of women over thirty years of age. Most women are returning to college to train for a career though some are looking for self actualization. This investigator sought to examine the changing family patterns that result when the wife-mother returns to college. To assure the presence of selected family characteristics, the study was limited to married women over thirty, spouse present and with children. A list of all qualifying students was supplied by the Office of Admission and Registration at the University of Maryland for spring semester, 1975. A systematic sampling procedure was employed and the sample was contacted. There were eighty-seven respondents suitable for this research project.

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire. In addition to asking for personal data, the questionnaire sought to elicit facts on areas of family responsibility, how decisions are made and how the division of labor is managed within the home. The data were coded and tabulated acquiring descriptive statistics and one-way frequency distributions.

The majority of the subjects and their spouses were between the ages of 30-39 with a mean age of 37.6 for the subjects and 40.7 for their spouses. They had been married an average of 16 years. The mean number of children per family was 2.7. Using the husband's education and occupation as a guide, the families were from middle to upper middle class with 77 per cent enjoying an annual income over $20,000. All the subjects had completed over

thirty semester hours of college.

About two-thirds of the subjects were not gainfully employed and considered themselves full time housewives and students. Those who were employed were generally in skilled and clerical positions.

The subjects indicated three main reasons for returning to college; for a better job (26 per cent), self actualization (23 per cent), and for a degree (25 per cent). The remainder indicated self-support and preparation for the "empty nest" as reasons for their return.

Many of the subjects were unsure about their career expectations and future income. Over half felt they would be employed in a professional or semi-professional position.

The subjects perceived their husbands as not being as satisfied with decisions, especially in the areas of family relations and home management and observed his changes in these areas as being negative. One would wonder why this is so since the subjects perceived their husband's reaction to their return to college as being positive. Though he may be supportive to her need for further education he may resent the fact that this need takes her away from home and family.

It was indicated that both subject and spouse were positive about changes that had been made in decisions concerning education.

When the subjects and their spouses were discussing significant decisions, the subjects indicated that they would often try to clarify the issue and present facts, something they were not as likely to do before returning to college. Many commented on feeling they made a more valuable contribution to the marriage since their

return to college. It seems feasible that this attitude of positivism might enable them to analyze and discuss important decisions with their spouses. They indicated that they got emotional during discussions less often. Both the subjects and spouses spent more time listening to each other and talking to each other before making a decision. They were more apt to try to understand the other person's point of view.

The most extensive consultation of a spouse before making a decision was in the area of housing. This seems likely since decisions in the housing area generally carry great magnitude. Subjects also consulted their spouses more frequently about educational type decisions since their return to college and there was a significant positive change in the consultation of spouses when making a decision regarding family relations.

Family members help more often with household tasks when the wife-mother returns to college. Contrary to what this investigator theorized in the conceptual framework, the husband is more willing to help than the children. He does help in traditional ways though, taking on duties that can be viewed as more masculine or pleasant to accomplish. He assists most by caring for the automobiles and making small repairs around the house. Positive changes, (additional help from the husband) were found in such family activities as entertainment of the children, preparation of breakfast and grocery shopping. He also spent more time helping the children with schoolwork.

In opposition to the investigator's third hypothesis concerning change, it was found that positive change far exceeded negative change in all sections of study. This coincides with the fact that

65 per cent of the subjects stated that their families supported their return to college. The only indication of discontent due to the wife-mother's return to school was the aforementioned negative change in husband's satisfaction derived from decisions in family relations and home management.

In conclusion, upon her return to college, the wife-mother is more active in decision making and receives more help with household work from family members. The study determined that the return to college of the wife-mother brings about many changes in family patterns within the family, mostly for the better.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to discern how the subjects viewed their role within the family they were asked who was responsible for the various areas of family living. Consequently, they revealed that they feel responsibility for the family should be equally shared in most instances. Two exceptions were in the areas of finance and home management. Many held to the traditional concept that management of the home is usually women's work. A significant percentage also felt that the husband-father is usually responsible for finance within the home. Yet, later in the questionnaire when asked who takes care of financial matters it was indicated that both husband and wife share in this equally. This may be due to their traditional view of the role of a husband as breadwinner which entails responsibility for the financial needs of the family. Budgeting, bill paying, etc., are generally handled by both husband and wife in our society.

It was established that women who return to college take part more frequently in the making of family decisions. This is often due to their growing ability to think (Pogrebin, 1973), something that is usually stimulated and reinforced in the classroom atmosphere.

When asked to describe their satisfaction derived from decisions made in areas of family life, it was revealed that the subjects were reasonably satisfied in all areas except home management. Yet they viewed the changes that had taken place in home management as largely positive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is likely that some of the changes taking place in the family were happening because the family life cycle continually brings change with it. Future study in this area would carry more magnitude if control groups were introduced such as an equal number of employed women and an equal number of housewives at different age levels for appropriate comparisons.

Seemingly the subjects could afford college as indicated by their husband's salaries. In the future this investigator would be more inquisitive about how this education is financed and whether it presents any problems to the budget.

The majority of the husbands of the subjects were well educated. Is there a correlation between the husband's education and the positive changing family patterns that were determined by the research? The subjects often indicated how proud their families were of them.

Another engaging question would be to find out when the wife-mother does her studying. Does she take up much family time or does she generally manage to study early in the morning or late into the evenings when the family isn't around?

The data demonstrated that 77 per cent of the husbands reacted favorably to the subjects return to college. Yet, the only significant negative change had to do with the wife's perception of her husband's satisfaction in the areas of family relations and home management. These days most men agree that a wife has a right to go to college or work outside the home if she wants to. A man may be proud of his wife's accomplishments and still deeply resent her need when it creates a home that is not managed as he is accustomed

to. The investigator conjectures that the data may have been quite different had the husband filled out a questionnaire along with his wife.

For further study in this area, recommendations for changes in the instrument are made. Editing the questionnaires indicated that the study would have been improved if the activities listed under division of labor were changed to include more meal preparation and clean up as well as care of the laundry. It may be that using an instrument developed in 1962 may not be as appropriate for 1975.

When asked to indicate change, it would have been more accurate to label it as more or less rather than positive or negative.

Now that the investigator has established where changes take place it seems important to determine what these changes are. The large quantity of change that took place in the areas of home management and family management seems to necessitate further study to define and specify the type of change, the levels of decision making within that change and how it is dealt with.

More insight would have been gained if the questionnaires had been followed with a personal interview using a random sample of the subjects. Though space was provided on the questionnaire for personal comments, most were left blank. It was through the limited comments received, that the investigator perceived a turmoil taking place within the family when the wife-mother returns to college.

The study would have been more meaningful if a different index for estimating social class would have been used. In our society, where 42 per cent of women work, a need is felt for an index which takes into account both the husband's and the wife's education and

occupation when determining social class.

Future study using the questionnaire should include an explanation of categories such as level of consumption, home management and family relations.

The subjects made frequent comments regarding the affect the women's movement was having in their lives. From this one could assume they would pursue non-traditional careers, those which mainly men pursue where pay is higher and the opportunity for advancement more obvious. Yet it was found that the majority were enrolled in liberal arts in college. While the idea of equality sounds right, the subjects seem to find it difficult to break from the tradition role of educator, home economist, librarian, etc.

It appears that the subjects are presently educated to state that responsibility for areas of family life ought to be equally shared with their husbands. Yet in reality they indicated that in most instances they alone were the ones who were accountable for them. Further study needs to be done in order to define how the women's movement, which stresses equality between the sexes, is really affecting the wife-mother. Is it bringing about internal strife and guilt to women who believe in the ideology of the movement yet are socialized as housewife and mother? The study might deal more with the subject's values, perceptions and attitudes as they frequently stated their feelings of guilt when they put their need for further education before family needs.

The investigator further ponders the question of divorce and separation due to the wife-mother's return to college. Of the 103 questionnaires returned, sixteen were not applicable due to the absence of a spouse though on the initial mailing, spouses were

present. Allowing for the death of one subject's spouse, fifteen per cent of the subjects who returned the questionnaires had become separated or divorced. Do women who return to college create an atmosphere of stress which brings about separation and divorce? Or, does the thought of separation take a woman back to college in order to prepare for independence and self-support? These are questions which could be answered with additional study. This investigator feels this might best be done in longitudinal study.

This study proposed to collect and interpret data regarding changing family patterns when the wife-mother returns to college. The findings, though revealing, indicate the importance for further study in this area.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
COLLEGE PARK 20742

DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
301-454-2142

1448 Jordan Avenue
Crofton, Maryland

August 1, 1975

Dear

Being a woman over thirty who just finished undergraduate work, I am interested in other women working towards the same goal. For my Master's Thesis I am studying the decision making patterns and the division of labor within families with "mother" back in school. I am looking at the changes within these areas. I am also interested in her career expectations.

I have prepared a questionnaire which I would like to send you with your permission, and which will take you about thirty minutes of your time to fill out and return.

Results of this research project will be available to you if you so desire.

As an enclosure with this letter, you will find a return post card on which you may indicate your willingness to cooperate with me by answering the questionnaire. Thank you for the courtesy of your assistance.

Very sincerely yours,

Mary J. Stephenson
Graduate Student and Assistant
Department of Family and Community
Development

MJS

Enclosure

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RETURNING WOMEN TO COLLEGE

Case No. _____

Please answer each of the following questions as completely as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. This questionnaire is not a test. The information you give on this form will be entirely confidential. Only a comprehensive tabulation of all answers given by the entire group completing the questionnaire will be used for research purposes. Your cooperation is very much appreciated. When finished please return in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Personal Data:

No. of Years Married _____ Your Age _____ Spouse's Age _____

No. of Children _____ Ages and Sex _____

Last Grade Completed in School by Spouse _____ His Occupation _____

No. of Units You've Completed in College _____ Graduated this Year _____ Type of Student: Full-Time _____ Part-Time _____ Major _____ Your Occupation _____

_____

Approximate TOTAL Income for 1974 (Include all sources of family income): Under $5000 _____ $5000 to $9999 _____ $10,000 to $14,999 _____ $15,000 to $19,999 _____ Over $20,000 _____ Your Previous Employment Record (Need not give specifics) _____

_____

Work Since Marriage: Full-Time: _____ years. Part-Time: _____ years. Not at all _____ Years Back in College _____ Years Out of Labor Market _____ Motivations for Returning to College _____

_____

_____

Job-Career Expectations (What type of work do you hope to be doing upon graduation?) _____

_____

Expectation of Income _____

Family Reaction to Your Return to Higher Education _____

_____

_____

_____

To what extent do your children help you with housework since you returned to college: Often _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom _____ Never _____? If this is a change from before you returned to college, do they help more _____ or less _____?

To what extent does your husband help with housework since you returned to college: Often _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom _____ Never _____? If this is a change, does he help more _____ or less _____?

Satisfaction Derived From Decisions:

How satisfied are you about the way decisions are made in the following areas in your family? Place an X in the column which best describes your feelings. You have the following choices:

1. Satisfied
2. Somewhat More Satisfied Than Not
3. Somewhat More Dissatisfied Than Not
4. Dissatisfied

Check "Change" (use + for positive change, - for negative) or "No Change" to indicate where decision-making patterns have changed since you returned to college.

Area	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Housing						
Family Relations						
Finance						
Level of Consumption						
Education						
Health						
Home Management						

In the following chart:

How satisfied do you think your spouse is about the way decisions are made in the following areas? Place an X in the column which best describes the way you think your spouse feels. The choices remain the same. Check "Change" (use + for a positive change and - for a negative change) or "No Change" as it applies.

Area	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Housing						
Family Relations						
Finance						
Level of Consumption						
Education						
Health						
Home Management						

Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

Discussion of Decisions:

Generally speaking when there are discussions between you and your spouse about significant decisions, how often do you do the following? Place an X in the column which best describes your actions. You have the following choices:

1. Always or Nearly Always
2. Sometimes
3. Very Seldom
4. Never or Most Never

Check "Change (use + for positive change, - for negative change) or "No Change" to indicate where change has taken place since you returned to college.

Actions	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Initiate discussion						
Get emotional (angry or hurt)						
Object to spouse's suggestions						
Prefer to accept mate's decision without much discussion						
Listen						
Clarify the issue						
Support the other person						
Present facts						
Try to understand spouse's view						
Talk						
Make the final decision						

Generally speaking when there are discussions between you and your spouse about significant decisions, how often does your spouse do each of the following? Place an X in the column which best describes your spouse's actions. Choices remain the same as in the preceding chart.

Check "Change" (use + for positive change and - for negative change) or "No Change" to indicate where change has taken place since you returned to college.

Actions	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Initiate discussion						
Get emotional (angry or hurt)						
Object to spouse's suggestions						
Prefer to accept mate's decision without much discussion						
Listen						
Clarify the issue						
Support the other person						
Present Facts						
Try to understand spouse's view						
Talk						
Make the final decision						

Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

Generally speaking when you make a decision in each of the areas below, how often do you consult your spouse before deciding? Place an X in the column which best describes your actions. You have the following choices:

1. Always or Nearly Always
2. Sometimes
3. Very seldom
4. Never or almost never

Check "Change" (use + to indicate positive change, - for negative) or "No Change" to indicate where changes have taken place since you returned to college.

Area	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Housing						
Family Relations						
Finance						
Level of Consumption						
Education						
Health						
Home Management						

Generally speaking when your spouse makes a decision in each of the areas below, how often does he consult you before deciding? Place an X in the column which best describes his actions. The choices remain the same as above.

Check "Change (use + to indicate positive change, - for negative) or "No Change" to indicate where changes have taken place since you returned to college.

Area	1	2	3	4	Change	No Change
Housing						
Family Relations						
Finance						
Level of Consumption						
Education						
Health						
Home Management						

Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

For each of the areas on the right side, select the number from the list on the left side which most nearly represents your opinion.

1. Man's responsibility only
2. Usually man's responsibility
3. Sometimes man's responsibility
4. Neither man's nor woman's responsibility
5. Equally man's and woman's responsibility
6. Sometimes woman's responsibility
7. Usually woman's responsibility
8. Woman's responsibility only

Housing _____

Family Relations _____

Financial _____

Level of Consumption _____

Education _____

Health _____

Home Management _____

Division of Labor:

This is a list of family activities. To what extent mothers and fathers participate in them varies from family to family. Place an X in the column which shows who, in your family, takes care of these activities. Where items no longer apply, please put a ✓ in the column to indicate who did them when they did apply to your family. Please leave blank those items which do not apply to your family. You have the following choices:

1. Husband
2. Both, Husband More
3. Both, But slightly husband more
4. Both, but slightly wife more
5. Both, wife more
6. Wife

Check "Change" (use + for positive change and - for negative change) or "No Change" indicate where changes have taken place since you returned to college.

Family Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	Change	No Change
Takes the children out for fun (zoo, park, etc.)								
Goes shopping for groceries								
Changes diapers								
Takes out the garbage								
Handles calls from creditors, exchanges merchandise								
Bathes children								
Cleans windows or walls								
Puts children to bed								
Cleans the floors								
Gets up at night with the children								
Gets breakfast								
Dresses children in the morning								
Washes the car								
Does small repairs around the house								
Helps children with school work								
Pays bills and sets family budget								
Attends school conferences								
Handles community disputes, such as with neighbors, landlord								

Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

WRITTEN COMMENTS MADE BY SUBJECTS ON QUESTIONNAIRE

FAMILY REACTION TO SUBJECTS RETURN TO COLLEGE

"Encouraging, supportive."

"Husband proud, daughter found it impossible to compete and dropped out of high school."

"They're happy to see me progress in my new career, college."

"Children reacted positively, husband torn between being proud and being inconvenienced."

"Consent, cooperation, interest."

"Externally very happy, internally very resentful."

"Fine, so long as it does not interfere with their needs."

"Children would prefer I be at home."

"They love it and are proud."

"Husband very encouraging, daughter sometimes unhappy with the time I have to spend doing school work."

"All for it as long as it doesn't interfere with their activities."

"Tolerant."

"It was a family decision. My husband especially encouraged me."

"My husband has been helpful, the children grumpy about the change."

"Husband enthusiastic, children accept as part of mother doing her thing."

"Somewhat negative."

"My oldest child has more respect for my intellectual ability than she had prior to my return to school."

"Family wishes for a full time mother-wife image."

"My husband doesn't mind as long as it doesn't interfere with my first duties--that of being a wife and mother."

"Not good, my son would still like services provided."

"Unhappy, now I have no time to waste on nonsense errands they would like to send me on."

"Some resentment because of reduced ferrying around."

"Resentment by children on loss of a servant. Fear on husband's part that if I could care for myself, I would leave him. Husband very opposed to my schooling. Feels I no longer love family because I am discontent with staying home."

"At first took a lot of kidding but now everyone seems to take it seriously."

"Cooperation mixed with an under current of resentment."

"Not much cooperation! More like me feeling my schooling is depriving the family of time and attention."

SATISFACTION DERIVED FROM DECISIONS

"Very little has changed since I went back to school until this year. I finally decided not to be a super-mother and super-wife. Both my children and husband are helping a little. Entertaining is an area of dissension. I do not have time on weekends to prepare dinner parties."

"Family relations seem to deteriorate during the school year and recover somewhat during summer and vacation periods."

"Husband ambivalent about my schooling. Wants me to be happy but doesn't like the inconvenience it causes, financial and time elements. Wants more of my time.

"Since I have taken courses my husband seems to be doing more decision making in those areas where I more or less made most of them. He seems to derive satisfaction in doing so and takes a great deal more interest in our general concerns of the home."

"I have assumed more financial responsibility as far as handling finances. I make out checks and pay bills now, both are happier. I don't have to ask for money and it frees him from the hassle of paying bills."

"School brings forth many feelings, power, accomplishment, excitement in actual knowledge."

"My husband is willing to accept my outside interests as long as they don't interfere too much with his pattern of living. Most responsibility of home management is still mine."

"My husband and my children listen to me more seriously since I have been in college. The biggest benefit to my family of my going to school, I believe, was the enrichment of family dinner discussions, my ability to help the children with their school work. Also--we took several trips to see things that I have studied about in my courses. This was the biggest plus--a more interesting life for all of us."

"Over all, I have an adaptable, understanding family. Husband only anxious for me to finally get done for my sake, concerned with my health, lack of sleep, etc."

"There is much turmoil and shouting in our family, there is little peace. My values and my husband's differ. I prefer eating nutritiously and moderately. He prefers to put money into showey cars, equipment, etc., we eat on a below poverty level budget.

I prefer to make decisions on equipment I use, my husband feels we both must decide on everything bought. I feel he should decide in areas he has expertise and I should in areas I have expertise."

"My son has suffered psychologically since I'm in school. The whole family is under a lot of tension. My biggest problem is not having enough time for the children and feeling guilty."

"My wishes are considered more now on financial matters than previously though we still spend too freely."

"Being only out of the house every morning, our lives have not been really affected by my going back to college."

"It's difficult to say that decision making has changed in our family because of my return to college. I think any change is due more to the fact of our children growing older. We seem to be continually re-assessing what we're doing and why. Maybe the real factor is middle age."

"Our relationship as a family is stronger. It may be that we have a family goal based on more than survival and fulfilling material needs."

"With school and my husband's new job, we hardly have time to sit and talk. We are always passing each other at the front door."

"The changes in our family have less to do with my going to college than the changes in the age of the children and the inflation of the economy."

DISCUSSION OF DECISIONS

"Our decisions do not seem to be affected by my schooling, although schooling seems to be at the bottom of some of his criticisms or arguments."

"Course taking has sharpened my ability to listen, clarify issues and present facts and is being applied at home. My husband in response seems to talk, listen and include me in his efforts to solve home problems."

"Changes occurred not when I went back to school but when I decided on a major, then I had a goal. Now I'm less dependent and more decisive."

"I've hung on to my parent's apron strings and ideas far too long."

"A woman learns how to get along with her husband. In my marriage we make certain decisions on our own and get along better that way. Only a very dependent woman can stand letting her husband make all the decisions and men will do so if one lets them."

"I'm somewhat defensive. I feel somewhat guilty for letting the housework slide, etc., so attempt to compensate in discussions."

"Since returning to school I have become much more forceful in standing behind my point of view and being able to present facts and discuss issues reasonably and calmly. I have gained a great deal of confidence in myself and my abilities."

"My husband is going through some fantastic changes which makes room for us both to clarify what we need better. Both of us are continuing to more finely define our needs."

"Our relationship has always been open and communicative. The changes are more on my behalf mainly because I believe I have a more open mind now than I did previously."

"I learned how to think again."

"I feel like more of a valuable contribution to the family than before."

DIVISION OF LABOR

"We are going to great pains to split the shit work in half."

"I have help as my mother lives with us, so my going back to college has not been a strain on the family."

"It may seem strange but we have seemed to adjust to changing demands throughout the length of our marriage."

"Our children do most of the chores--garbage, vacuuming, etc."

"My husband and I both are motivated to live as equals, but are conditioned in inequality. My husband most easily pursues equality in the vital areas, such as food related ones; he's very resistant to sharing the postponable, never ceasing mundane details because they are distracting to his creative abilities. For my part, I'm not always pragmatic about who does what, general cumulative resentment sometimes interferes!" (After indicating that she was responsible for all family activities but two.)

"This really shows how supportive my husband is of me. I tend to cop-out of doing things, using school as my excuse and my husband seems to understand the pressure I'm under and helps out."

"Male chauvinism lives."

"Since returning to school we employed a cleaning lady to do all the major housework."

"I have an extremely helpful, cooperative, well adjusted husband. My husband and two older sons have no hang-ups about helping around the house. I think we have a healthy respect for one another."

"Husband usually unavailable when children were small, but I can fairly say he was also disinterested. This is not to say he did not get very upset when anything went wrong. He has a great

care and concern for/about them but..."

"I always have handled more responsibilities around the house than my husband has even when I have a full time job. I do it but I resent it also."

"For several years my husband took the girls out every Sunday afternoon so I could study. This had the benefit of good times with Daddy alone, where he got special attention and vice versa. I felt it was beneficial to everyone."

"Our life style changed very little during my college years. It was to my own detriment that I tried to go on as pre-college, maintaining same level of house work and assistance from husband and children. This was wrong, especially physically and mentally for me."

"Since I returned to school my husband does a few small household chores but he has abandoned household repairs since he feels I no longer care for my home because I do not wish to be there all day. I have had to assume major indoor painting and repairs. He has become very active in professional societies and does much traveling in his job to avoid being home."

"My spouse has taken almost all responsibility while I'm in college, including dropping out himself."

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